



Facts About the 2004 Healthy Youth Survey and Drug Use in Washington

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The Good News

- Washington State is experiencing a **decline in recent use of marijuana by school-age children.**
- DSHS and its community partners invest in services that have proven to work. The state is investing the public dollar efficiently and private partners are heeding the call to help young people. Communities have a greater awareness of the financial strain substance abuse can have on their members and on public education as well as the judicial, social service and health care systems.
- **Fewer 12th graders are using marijuana.** Marijuana use by 12th graders has dropped by more than 5 percentage points in only two years (19.5 percent versus 24.7 percent in 2002). Regular marijuana use is associated with delayed mental and emotional development. The much higher potency of today's marijuana is one reason that the rate of Washington teens admitted into treatment programs increased 155 percent between 1993 and 1998.
- **More students say drug use is risky.** The percentage of 12th graders who are at risk to drug use decreased from 43 percent in 2002 to 38 percent in 2004.

Drug Trends of Concern

- **Regular use of alcohol continues to be at high levels,** and has even increased by 3 percentage points among 10th graders. In addition, there is an alarming number of students who report binge drinking.

Why These Results Are Important

- **Drug use affects school success:** A 2001 study commissioned by DSHS found that Washington middle school students whose peers had little or no involvement with drinking and drugs scored on average 18 points higher on the state reading test, and 45 points higher on math, than students whose peers had a moderate level of drinking or drug use.
- **One in four children are affected by parental substance abuse.** Children of substance abusers are the highest risk group for future drug and alcohol dependence, and are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression. Sixty-seven percent of parents or caregivers of children placed in group or foster homes have a substance abuse problem. Fifty to 80 percent of all child abuse and neglect cases involve alcohol and other drug use by parents. In turn, childhood victimization is a major risk factor for later drug abuse. Targeted drug prevention programs for children at risk are breaking this cycle.
- **Drug use is expensive:** Alcohol and other drug abuse cost Washington \$2.45 billion in 1996.
- **Drug use is linked to many problems:** Substance abuse has clear linkages with chemical dependency, school failure, sexual abuse, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, accidental injuries and deaths, violence and youth suicide. **When drinking is delayed until age 21, a child's risk of serious alcohol related problems is decreased by 70 percent.**

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DSHS Efforts to Contribute to Drug Prevention Include:

- **Implementing the state's Substance Abuse Prevention Plan** in collaboration with state agency partners. The plan requires agencies to collect their data in a uniform way, establish programs with proven track records and provide professional training.
- **Providing prevention services** to more than 430,000 Washington residents each year. Those prevention services include strengthening families, providing adult mentors to school children, offering education about the dangers of substance abuse and skill building.
- **Investing in prevention programs and strategies** that researchers have proven to be effective in schools, families, peer groups and communities through contracts with county and tribal governments.
- **Reducing Underage Drinking (RUAD) Initiative:** Collaborating with the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, Liquor Control Board and State Patrol to support community-based prevention/law enforcement partnerships, in addition to statewide education campaigns. RUAD has funded alcohol prevention and control projects in 18 counties since 1999.
- **Supporting the Partnership for a Drug Free Washington:** A public/private partnership designed to increase the number of anti-drug messages on radio and television for teens and parents. More than \$2 million in donated and privately funded airtime has been secured in the past two years.